



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

AUG 11 2011

THE ADMINISTRATOR

The Honorable Scott Walker
Governor of Wisconsin
P.O. Box 7863
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

Dear Governor Walker:

Thank you for your letter of July 11, 2011, about the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's reconsideration of the 2008 National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for ground-level ozone. In your letter, you expressed concern over the agency's decision to reconsider the 2008 standard. I would like to respond to this concern.

I decided to reconsider the 2008 standard of 0.075 parts per million (ppm) because it was significantly less protective of public health than even the high end of the 0.060-0.070 ppm range that the Congressionally-established Clean Air Science Advisory Committee (CASAC) recommended. The scientific evidence that ozone causes severe public health problems is robust and well understood. Ozone – commonly called smog – is one of the most widespread air pollutants. Even with many areas meeting the current standards, it is responsible for tens of thousands of emergency room visits by Americans each year for serious respiratory conditions, including asthma. Asthma affects 25 million people in the United States, including seven million children. One out of every 10 school-aged children is affected, and approximately 13 million people have reported having an asthma attack in the past year. Due to these significant health impacts, there are substantial benefits to society from strengthening the ozone standards. The agency estimates that such standards could provide billions of dollars in public health benefits in 2020, including the prevention of thousands of premature deaths, thousands of heart attacks, and thousands of hospital and emergency room visits.

The agency has conducted the reconsideration in an open, transparent process that has allowed for robust public participation. Public hearings on the 2010 proposed standards were held in Arlington, Virginia; Houston, Texas; and Sacramento, California. More than 5,000 comments were received on the 2010 proposed revisions to the ozone NAAQS. These comments came from state, tribal and local government agencies; industry and related associations; medical, public health and environmental groups; and individuals, including mass petitions with more than 45,000 individual signatures.

To conclude the EPA's extensive review of the science, I asked CASAC for further interpretation of the epidemiological and clinical studies they used to make their recommendation and will review this additional input from CASAC before the new standard is selected. Overall, the CASAC panel has reiterated their strong, unanimous support for an 8-hour ozone standard in the range of 0.060 to 0.070 ppm. The EPA will consider the advice of CASAC in reaching its decision, and will also independently consider the scientific and technical information in the record.

A new ozone standard will be based on the best science and meet the obligation to protect the health of the American people as established under the Clean Air Act. In implementing this new standard, EPA will use the long-standing flexibility in the Clean Air Act to consider costs, jobs and the economy. Furthermore, the EPA is moving forward with a number of national rules that will significantly reduce pollution and improve public health for all Americans—rules designed to reduce harmful emissions from cars, power plants and other industrial facilities that contribute to ozone formation.

I am fully committed to finalizing EPA's reconsideration of the Clean Air Act health standard for ground level ozone. That reconsideration is currently going through interagency review led by OMB. We look forward to finalizing this standard shortly. Again, thank you for your letter. If you have further questions, please contact me, or your staff may call Sarah Hospodor-Pallone, Deputy Associate Administrator for Intergovernmental Relations, at (202) 564-7178.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Jackson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lisa P. Jackson